

Kentucky Marker Papers

Primary – Grade 12

~ without Annotations ~

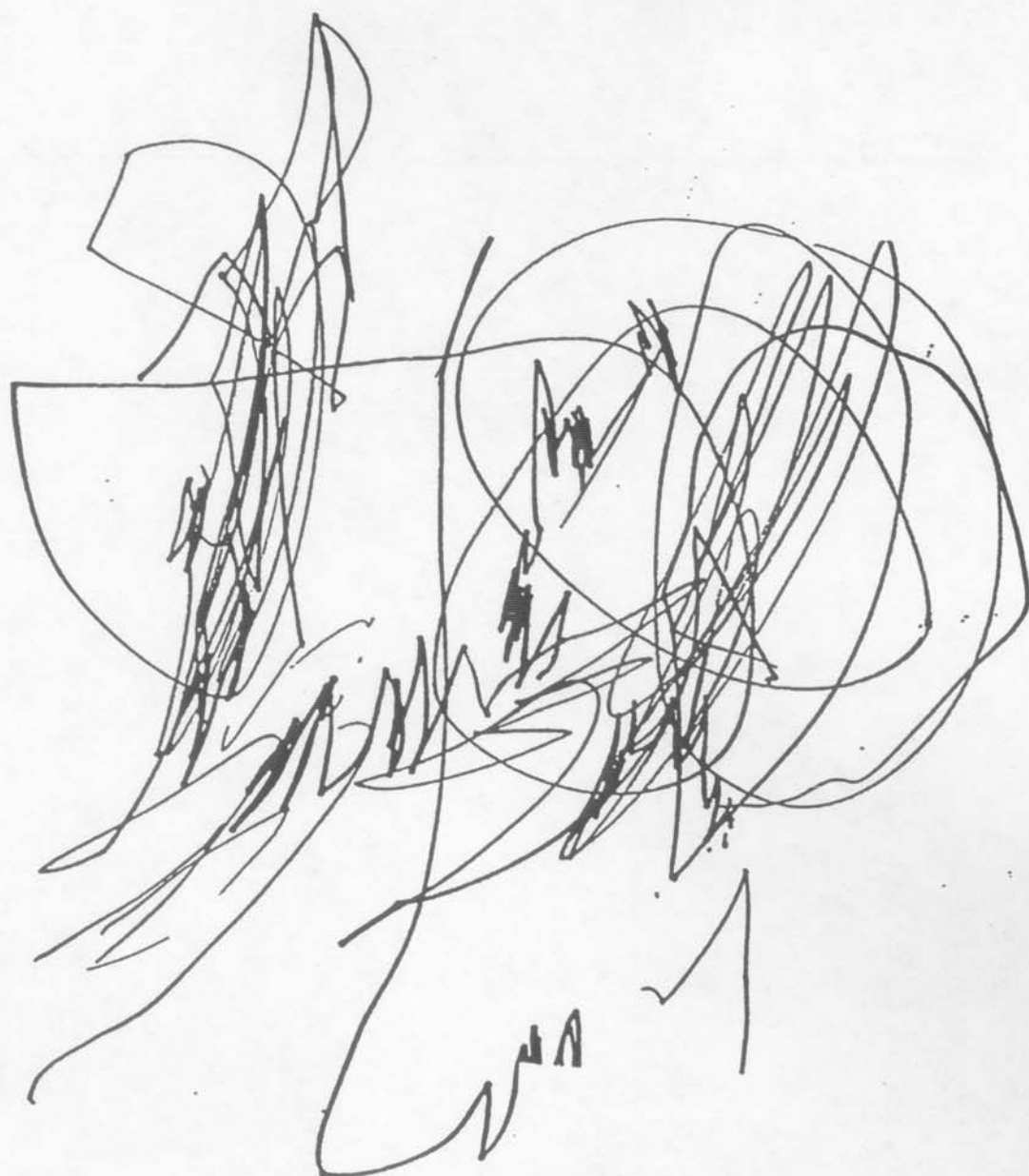


Kentucky Department
of Education

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Gene Wilhoit, Commissioner
Kentucky Department of Education

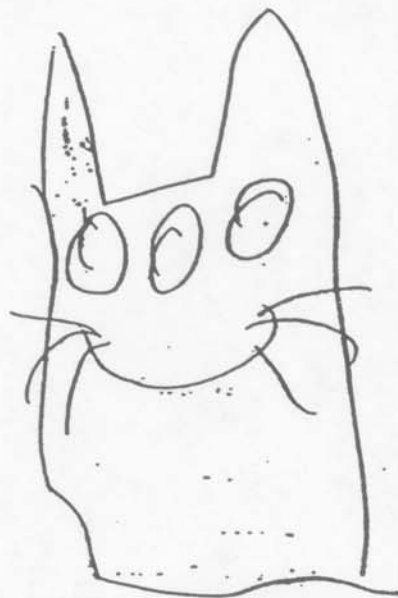
PERSONAL NARRATIVES



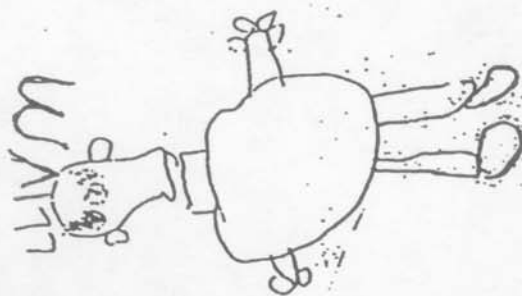
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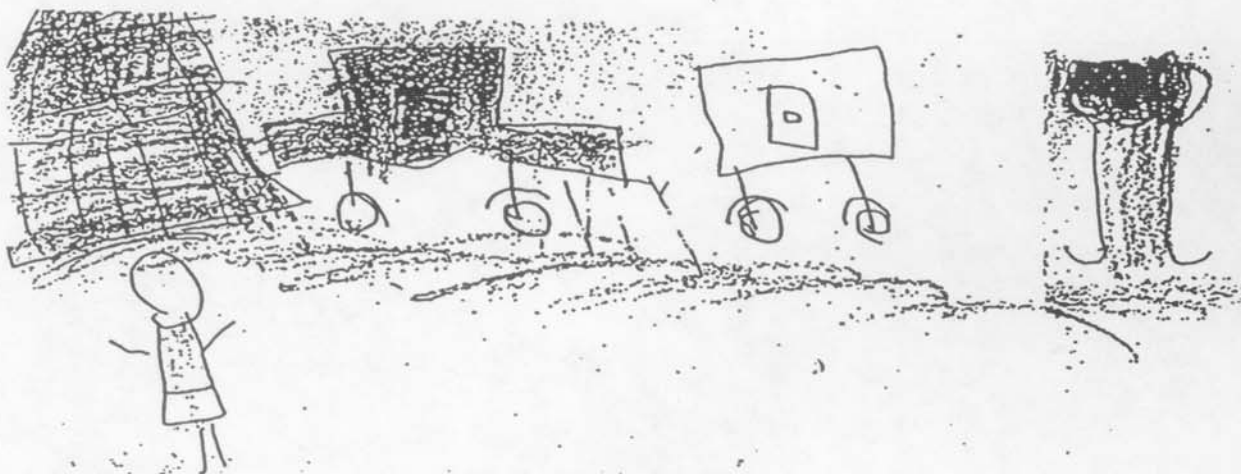
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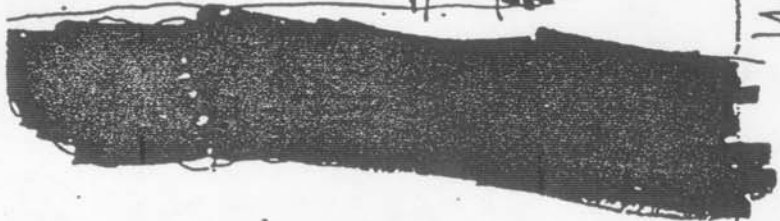
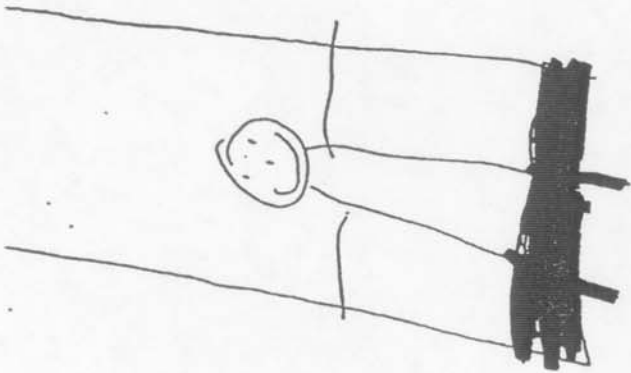
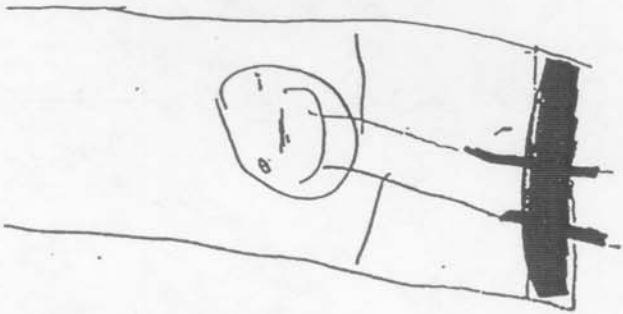


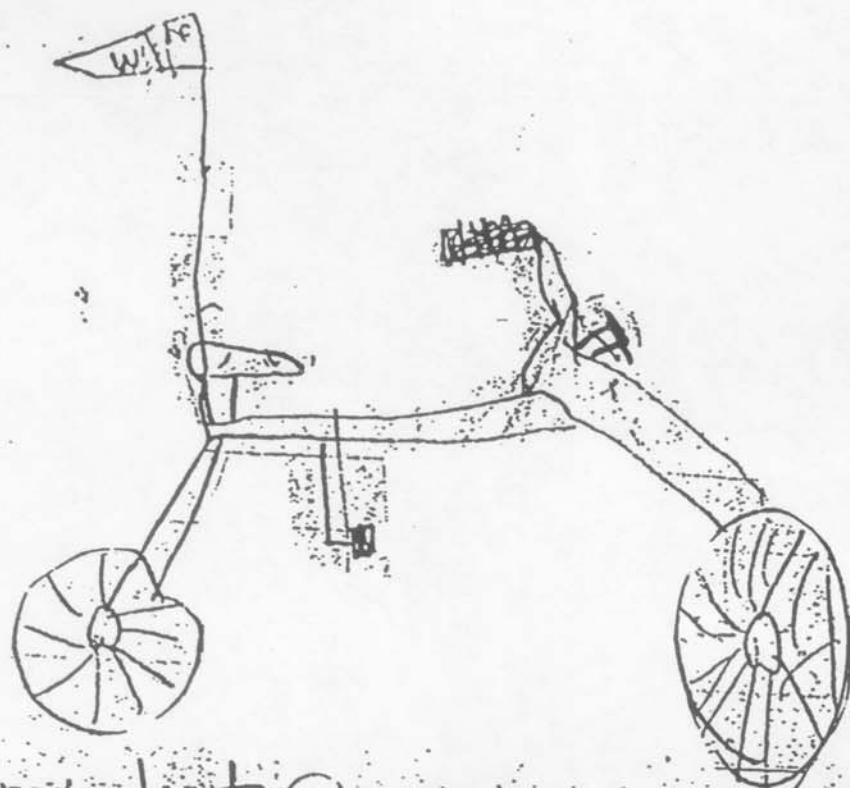
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C.J. GUNMS





I wat t o my cassin.
How s and i rad my
bike.

I Wet to
the Move
and I sol Baby
dill and to mee
and I was tied
to cri

I Sol mis Briat

at Post of Is Shelwos.

Riting Oletk Shelwos.

talked to my Cousins.

One snowy day I
went out sid and I

built a snowman.

I had a great time

with my mom and Si.
We put a Cafet

for the nos and
We put buttons for
the Clos good I
dras up Mom and Sis did
and Mom and My Dad Stad
too. inside and Watched
the Bollgam. The End

Mom ~~accidently~~ -
dropped a glass plate
and it spilled everywe-
r. Mom told me to-
get back but it was-
to late. I steppe
a in glass and mom
got all the glass out.
When mom got-
all the glass out
she gave me ice-cre

When I came home from school, I knew
what to do!

I packed my bags and got ready to go to Disney
World! So we ^{took} our bags and put them in the
van. And ~~did~~ started the van and
It took about one day to get there. we were ^{gone}!
We stayed in a hotel:

I had so much fun I couldn't believe it!
I went on a roller coaster!
After four days we left.

I didn't want to leave but I had to.
Then I took a day to get home.
But the good part was I had fun!

The End!



I can remember the first time I spent the night with my friend, I was 5. She asked me if I wanted to so I thought about it. I knew it would be fun, but I had never spent the night with a friend. and I might miss my family. When we had to go to bed. Finally it was time to go I was a little worried, when I got there it was 6:30 so we ate pizza for dinner. Then we watched a movie, after that we played Candy Land. Soon it was time for bed, but for some reason I fell right to sleep without even thinking about missing my family. I had Fun!

One very bad Day
Crack! The ball sailed center
fielded but, dropped before going
over the fence.
The center fielder got the ball
and pegged it to second,
but was booking to second
but I stopped, I acted like I
was going back to first and
then headed to second because
the second baseman throw the
ball to first, the first baseman

throw to second. The second
baseman caught the ball and
tagged me. Outta! Shouted
the umpire, I throw my arms
up and I was going to shout
at the umpire but I just
walked away, mad. Yank! Yank! I
yanked my helmet off and
went to the dugout. I hated
that day.

My First Spelling Test In My Life

I was in my classroom getting ready for my first spelling test. Everybody was sitting in their desk with a piece of paper in front of them. There was not a sound in the classroom.

I was so nervous, I was shaking and my knees were hitting and bouncing off from each other. Then all of a sudden my teacher called out a word. I heard my teacher say the word I really did but mostly all I could hear was my mind saying I'm so nervous, I'm so nervous.

Then I started to smell my sweat and my pencil started to slide out of my hand.

I thought I saw my hand shaking like it was going crazy. Then I took my pencil and wrote down the word hoping I would get it right.

Then my teacher called out the word go and waited a min. or two. Right then I thought this isn't so bad. Next she called out another word and waited a min. or two. My teacher did the rest of the spelling test just like that.

When she was done with the spelling test she graded them. After she was done grading them, she called out the people who made 100% and of a sudden she called out

I was so proud of
myself. I stayed still
for a min. and thought
about something. I was
thinking all that
wondering for nothing.
I hope next time
I will not be
nervous.

When I Was Scared

Dad had just bought me a brand new bike for my birthday. I had turned 7 and my dad expected me to know how to ride my bike like a champ. I was so scared! I had never ridden a bike before, but I was still determined to try. So I got on my bike and I did a dumb thing. First I forgot my gears. Second instead of going on the ground I went down

a hill. I was doing fine until I took off.

I was heading straight for the best basketball

game. Dad forgot to show me where the

brakes were, and boom! I was knocked out.

Dad ran down to get me. He carried

me up the hill and layed me on the truck.

I was still unconscious. Mom

and Emily came running. I woke up

and put my hand on my forehead.

I said "Ouch." I took my hand

off my head. It had blood all over it.

I got sick.

— Mom cleaned me up, and I looked
in the mirror. I had a big spot on my
fore head. I screamed! I tried to cover
it with bandaid's, but mom said it would
take a whole box to cover it. I said
"I don't want to go to school tomorrow."
She said "Good, It's Friday."

Storm Damages

County"

Last summer my Mom was taking
 my sister, and me, to our
 Mammy because she had to go
 with ^{my} other sister to a road
 block. They went so they would
 make money for the state tournament
 that I was going to play softball
 in.

We drove in and everyone greeted
 each other with hugs, kisses, and talked
 awhile.

Soon Mom and I left and
 I and I rode our bikes on their
 gravel driveway. Then, I friends
 joined us.

I guess it was Dad who
 then called out, "You'd better go in
 because there was just a severe thunder-
 storm warning for the whole tri-state,
 in effect until 8:00 tonight." So we
 parked our bikes and ran back inside.
 I ran a long way to get to
 his house. Sure enough, as soon as we
 walked inside, it started storming. Every
 minute it got worse. There weren't

just flashes of lightning, there were big long streaks of lightning, followed by loud booms of thunder. I was screaming bloody murder! The whole family was about to panic! "J, is it almost over?" I asked, still scared to death!

I replied back to her, "Yes, but you have to be quiet and quit screaming."

Unfortunately, the storm still got worse.

So Mommy took us downstairs to the basement to try to calm us down.

I, my Aunt, who is in a wheelchair was a little frightened, but wasn't able to go downstairs with us.

While I let out one more scream, we heard a loud thud. It didn't sound normal even though we could still hear the wind real strong. So Mommy went upstairs to see what that loud thud was. We could hear her call out, "O, g, great! There's a tree on the patio." I tried to go up and see what had happened, but I wouldn't let me. So I stayed down with her because she looked too scared.

Suddenly we remembered... Mom!
She and L are still at the road block!
Then all of a sudden... the storm
began to let up and everyone let out
a loud sigh. Whheeww!!!

Soon we got a phone call from one
of Mom's and Mamma's friends saying,
"there's a tree on G's house and
power lines, are down, and thankfully their
not home."

Next, Dad called to make sure that
everyone was O.K. Fortunately, we were
all fine, even I.

Soon Mom picked us up, went
home, and checked out all the damage
to our house and to our neighbors
houses. We never heard of any other
counties, just!

That night Mom, L and I stayed
up with a candle lit because the power
was off. We could see who could name
the most birds, fruits, and other things.
(Anything to keep our minds busy.)

Soon, the power was back on and
everyone lived through that horrible

storm. Fortunately and thankfully, no
one was hurt.

GRADE 5 - PERSONAL NARRATIVE

A KNOCK AT THE KNOX

"Hey guys... are you ready to see some authentic war tanks?!?!??" Uncle Victor yelled.

Victor worked in the Navy and he wanted to show Ryan and me some army tanks!

As we were walking through the museum, we saw this old, beat up tank. It looked like "Rocky" after a bad fight. We stopped to ask somebody that worked at Fort Knox if they had any tanks that you could climb on.

He replied, "Yes, we do. They're right outside those doors," as he pointed to a pair of steel doors, "But whatever you do, DON'T HIT YOUR HEAD ON THE TANKS!"

I was so happy I sprinted over to the doors like a starving lion after its fallen prey. It was a blistering hot day and the grass was scorched!! We headed to the first tank.

Victor said, "I want a picture of you and Ryan on the front of the tank." Ryan climbed up to the front of the tank as adept as a mountain goat up a rocky cliff. I scrambled onto the back of the tank and raised up very abruptly and to my surprise there was an overhang of metal. "Ow!!" I blurted. "What in the world did I hit?"

Victor came rushing over to see what was the matter. He found me hunched over with my hand to my head, and blood was oozing between my fingers. Victor ripped his shirt off and wrapped it around my head. Then he picked me up and rushed me to his truck.

As Victor sat me down on the seat, I felt like I was going to pass out. My head was spinning, and my arms and legs felt like rubber. As if he didn't know I felt bad enough already, he announced, "We've got to take you to the emergency room."

I shouted, "EMERGENCY ROOM!?!?"

He calmly answered, "Yes."

I was ready to cry, but crying would only make matters worse. Victor knew how upset I was, so he started cracking jokes like, "I think I see your brains about to fall out."

When we arrived at the emergency room, Victor quickly told the nurse, "This boy cracked his head open!" They led us to a room, where my mom joined us. The nurse had my mom hold numbing medicine on my head, because they decided that I would have to get.....STITCHES!!!! My knees were shaking when they finished the last stitch. I was relieved to be done with this awful procedure!

Two weeks later we went over to Victor's house to eat dinner. After we were finished eating Victor went upstairs and brought down a little box. He gave it to me and I opened it. It was my grandpa's "Red Badge Of Courage," that he received from the Navy. Grandpa passed it down to Victor, and Victor passed it down to me. Victor told me he wanted me to have it for being so brave and not crying when I hit my head. I was so proud and honored to receive my grandpa's medal. I felt like I was glowing in the spotlight!

GRADE 5 - PERSONAL NARRATIVE

My Best

"And in lane #4 Team One's, Jane Doe !" The announcer exclaimed over the intercom, which was way too close to the pool, and I thought was going to fall in! I was at South Central (a regional competition). I stepped onto the first step of the swimming block and felt a huge drop of sweat drip off my nose. I posed, as if I had bulging muscles, to turn the ever lasting stares into laughs. The crowd did as I wished and burst out into a million chuckles. I let out a sigh of relief and peered over at my mother to see her reaction to my pose.

She was standing as close as she could get to the pool, almost on top of the gate. She gave me an enormous smile that seemed to say "just do your best."

In lane six the last name was being announced, and then the announcer got a serious look on his face.

"Swimmers step onto the block!" he demanded pointing at the swimmers (including me). I felt like diving in right then, I was so excited, and hot! "Take your marks," echoed the announcer.

I bent to touch my orange toe nails as the wings of the butterflies in my stomach got larger and larger, until I felt like I was going to pop.

"Beeeeep!" the buzzer screeched informing the swimmers to dive in. Along with the other swimmers, I dove in. My fingertips reached the freezing water and I heard a million

screams, cheering the representatives of their teams on. The rest of my body hit the pool water, immediately my arms began stroking and my legs began kicking. Out of the corner of my eye, I noticed two girls ahead of me. I tried a little harder to go faster. I tried so hard I began to cry under the water.

I plunged off the concrete wall to start my second length. Now I saw three girls in front. I knew I couldn't push myself any harder and seemed to slow down a bit. The yells got louder and multiplied the closer I got to the wall.

I slammed my raisin-like hands on the black touch pad, and attempted to stand up but was too weak. The timer pulled me out of the water and told me that I had done well.

I found out later that I had gotten fourth place. Even though I didn't get first place, and had worked really hard and done my best, I was very proud of my new medal and especially me! Pushing yourself to the limit makes your heart feel happier than getting the top medal. Doing your best is one of the most wonderful feelings in the world!

GRADE 6 - PERSONAL NARRATIVE

A huge "fad" in my neighborhood last year was jumping on this kid's trampoline. It was very fun. The kid who owned this "tramp" (the now common name for trampoline) was kind of a "geek" because he was unathletic. But once he got this tramp, many of the very popular kids in the neighborhood began to flock to the kid's house to jump, for they were allowed. I, being one of the popular kids in the neighborhood, felt more and more pressure put on me to hop on and have some fun. But one imovable pothole lied in my road to trampoline fun and games this summer. My mother.

Yes, my mother. She's very overprotectant to my brother and I. You see she works at Children's Hospital. There have been many days when she's come home talking about kids she sees at work who have fallen off tramps, or bikes and have been paralyzed terribly.

So one day when she was in a very happy and loving mood, (I'd been waiting for one of these days to ask her all of my questions which involved "pretty please?") I walked up to her, and speaking in my nicest voice asked, "Hey, Mom could I by any chance jump on the tramp with the other kids?" So it began.(a long lecture) For over 15 minutes she explained to my crumbling body in heartbreaking

detail, why I could not. After tossing in a few what if's, but's and please's my defeated plea ended.

How could I possibly tell my friends this? Or would I? So now I would be the odd man out. So much for my popularity!

One lonely day after school, I decided to ride my bike down to the tramp to see if my friends were down there. Sure enough there they were, jumping and having so much fun. As I stood by the side of the tramp in envy, we talked about our day. After a while, my closest friend of the bunch urged me to get on unaware that I wasn't allowed. As the compulsion built up inside me I knew I could not lose my popularity, so without thinking I hopped on and began jumping.

It felt so good! As my friends and I talked I began to realize what would happen if my mom caught me jumping. But after a while of having so much fun I forgot all about it.

You know, this really was like poison ivy. Although someone tells you not to itch it, and you know your not suppose to, but it itches like crazy. Then once you itch it you feel terribly guilty but you keep itching and can't stop. The your trouble only spreads.(like mine would)

As I was jumping, I felt more and more guilty but kept jumping. The tramp was behind the kid's

house so I kept eyeing the corner of the house nervously, expecting my mom to come walking around and catching me. Then, after about five more minutes, my mom came walking around that corner. A disappointed frown crossed her face. As I jumped off the tramp in fright and unexpectation of what would be said next, I spoke to my friends quickly, "Uh, uh, I'm really late for ball practice." "You're in for it, young man!" I heard my mom say. Oh great! I thought.

After a vigorous fine of \$10, and one whole week of being grounded, I figured that without a doubt I acted before thinking. My actions would definitely be different today for this certainly taught me a lesson. As it turns out, my friends don't really care after all.



Hangin' With the Big Dogs

I'm sure when you were a kid, you wanted to act older. Last year I tried to act older too. The problem with that is I was trying to run with the big dogs, but this pup learned a hard lesson that fateful day.

See, my Dad's work, M. County Coal, holds an annual golf tournament every year at P. Country Club.

Well, last September I entered that tournament with my Dad and two of his buddies. I tried to prove that I was a golf prodigy, considering I out drove all the little guys at the driving range, I thought I was a golf prodigy.

I was so sure that I could see that weird lookin' man on top of a golf trophy sitting up on my shelf, I already had a place picked out for it.

On the tee off area there lay an off white tee and a logoed golf ball on top of it.

The guys whispering off to the side made me nervous, were they talking about me or were they talking about the shovel (piece of machinery) that was down at work? I was convinced that if they weren't talking about me, they were probably thinking about me, they were probably thinking that they had better not get beat by an eleven year old.

Nervous and worried, I got in my pro form stance, legs shoulder length apart and arms fully extended. I suddenly connected with the ball." It's going, going, going, gone and where it went, nobody knows. I looked everywhere but no ball.

As of right now, not to many things are going my way. The only good thing is looking forward to getting to the cart and finishing my peanuts and pop, and driving the cart to the next hole.

Recovering from a near golf cart flip in which I turned a curve way too sharp and came up on two wheels, I got a hole in one on the second hole, if you call a big, fat, stupid pond a hole.

I threw my golf club in my bag angrily, waiting for the next hole to come up.

On the third hole I actually got the ball in the hole, after about twenty shots. At this point in time, I knew I wasn't exactly getting warmed up. The space on my shelf, it might have to sit empty for awhile longer.

Things went that way to about the sixteenth hole. That one was the only hole I hit the ball past one-hundred yards, except for the first one and I don't want to get in to that again.

The next time I hit the white ball, it glided in the air like an eagle. All of the sudden a man came out of nowhere and got under my ball, right where the shadow of my ball was.

I yelled.

"44444444444444!!!!"

The man covered his head like a helpless child. With a lot of luck, the ball landed about two feet from the man's head.

I later found out that the near candidate for brain surgery didn't come out of nowhere, he was there the whole time, I just didn't see him.

If you ignored the almost ambulance call, the shot was perfect.

"Hole eighteen's gonna be the best" I said with a whole lot of self-confidence.

On hole eighteen you have to hit the ball over a two-hundred and ten feet river bed.

I took my back swing and "POW!!" as the titanium hit the ball all I could hear as I closed my eyes were the

"Ooohs" and

"Aaahs".

Pleading in my head, I told Dad, "It might make it."

"CRACK!!!!"

The ball hit a tree and ricochets into the dried up river bed.

" Well, it ain't like it ruined your score." Dad said trying to be humorous, but I didn't think it was a bit funny.

When we got back to the clubhouse I was congratulated for being the youngest player by my Uncle R. . . ., the tournament host, also an employee at M. . . . County Coal.

Well, I have to say it was a good experience, an embarrassing experience, but a good one.

Next time, I'll not hang with the big dogs, I'll just wait on the porch for them to come home!

GRADE 7 - PERSONAL NARRATIVE

"Learning to Drive"

"Oooooahhhhhh," I yawned sleepily. "Mom, it's too early to get up."

"No, it's not, Honey. You have to get up and get ready for school."

I got out of bed and trudged downstairs to begin preparation for school. I was six years old at the time, and my brother, Brennan, was four. When I came back down, I was grouchy for no apparent reason.

"How come we gotta go to school all the time," I questioned.

"So that you can learn and get a good job when you grow up."

"But I don't like it," I complained stubbornly.

"That's just part of life, R____. Now go brush your teeth and I'll be in there in a minute to comb your hair."

I did as I was told. B_____ was also in the bathroom brushing his teeth.

"Do you like going to school, B_____?" I asked.

"Yeah," he said, "It's fun!"

"Well, I sure don't."

Mom combed our hair, and we were ready to go to school.

"Come on boys, we are going to be late," yelled Mom from the kitchen.

"Wait a second," I yelled back for no particular reason.

"No, come right now," she demanded.

"We're coming, we're coming."

We grabbed our lunches and headed outside and down the stairs to the dark-green Volvo. It was a rather brisk day, so I wore a jacket.

To understand this story, you have to be able to visualize my driveway. It started out going perpendicular to the road towards the backyard at a slant. Then, it went left and then left again into the garage. From up above, this probably looked something like a squared-off U.

For some reason, that day the car was parked at the end of the straight part of the driveway facing the yard. The yard continued at a downward slant until the point where our woods began.

The three of us loaded into car. Mom turned it on, and we started to pull out of the driveway. Just as we entered the road, Mom said, "OOPS. I forgot my purse. I must have left it in my bedroom."

We pulled back down the driveway and Mom went inside to get her purse. B_____ and I were left alone in the car. Out of curiosity, we both climbed into the front seat.

"Hey, W_____, what's dat stick?" asked B_____. What he was referring to as a stick was really the gear shifter.

"I don't know, but I dare you to push on it."

So, with my encouragement, B_____ pushed the *stick*. You can probably guess what happened next. We began to roll down our backyard. B_____ had knocked the car out of gear and there was just enough of an angle for the car to roll. B_____ stuck his head out the window and was now screaming. I was so frightened I couldn't even move.

CRUNCH! we both heard. It was the sound of my bike being smashed like an ant under the wheels of the car. We were rolling at a speed less than ten miles per hour, but it was enough to scare two young boys half to death. The car hit a tree, and we stopped with a loud thud.

Neither of us were injured, and the car just had a few scratches. My bike had been totally demolished, though. Mom came running up behind us and cried "Oh my gosh, boys, are you all right?"

"Yeah," we replied with panic-stricken voices.

In the end, I got a new bike which was better than the one before, so I was happy. We were late for school, but my mom took care of it. Also, B_____ and I were denied the privilege of entering a vehicle without an adult accompanying us, but we were not too upset.

I learned the hard way that I should not touch or bother anything that I am not fully familiar with. B_____ learned not to listen to everything I tell him to do, and Mom learned not to leave two young boys alone in a car.

The Extreme Sky Flier

Imagine yourself slowly being raised 175 feet into the air. Every foot you go to reach the destination the ground keeps getting smaller and smaller. People start looking like ants and your heart is racing.

Sounds scary! But actually it's not, it's really, absolutely the most fun thing I've ever done.

It all started a week before school, my family and I went to Cincinnati, to the Kings Island amusement park. My sister and I were walking around riding all of the roller coasters because I've never ridden a roller coaster before... But that's a different story.

Never the less we were walking around and we saw this awesome ride called the "Extreme Sky Flier". It looked really cool, but I was afraid to ride it. My sister kept on bugging me every time we walked past the tall arched ride with a string right down the middle.

" Kristi ", Melissa , my sister said, "ride that awesome ride, it's not going to kill you, we are just going to be raised up 175 feet and then dropped, that's all."

" Yeah that's all!" I thought.

I'm really afraid of heights. One time we were walking on a bridge about 50 feet high and I about had a heart attack. I didn't even want to think about 175ft. That's a little over three times as high. I told myself there was no way I was going to do that. It makes me shiver when I think about it.

Well, about an hour later we ran into my dad who was with my brother Shane.

Melissa said, "Dad will you and *Kristi* ride the 'Extreme Sky Flier' with me?" I guess she directed that towards me, just to butter me up. Because when dad says yes there's hardly any arguing.

Dad thought for a while, "What's the cost?", he asked.

"About \$15 each."

"Well, okay", replied dad.

The next thing I knew I was being dragged to the ticket line, which was actually very short, probably because not many people are as crazy as us.

Then before I could say anything about what I thought about the situation dad had already paid.

"Be back in 10 minutes", said the lady in the booth.

I thought to myself, "Great now I can't chicken out of this. I'm already paid for. Nobody else in our family would even think about riding that death defying ride."

I slowly followed my sister and dad over to mom who was hearing about what *we* were doing.

My mom about died as well as myself. 10 minutes was up and we were heading for the ride. My anticipation rose about what was getting ready to happen. The ride's scariness got my heart racing. The closer I got the faster my heart beat.

When we reached the ride the instructors helped us into our suits. They were kind of weird, like a parasailing suit of some sort. Mine was purple. I don't quite remember the color of my sister's and dad's suit. I do remember thinking to myself, "Why am I risking my life for a ride!"

The next thing I remember it was our turn and we were on the stand. The instructors put me, my dad, and my sister in line, vertically, with me in the middle.

"Lock arms", said the guy who was getting us ready. I don't remember what he looked like. I really didn't care at the time, all I cared about was me living through this. "Now don't hold on to us, okay you're going to feel a little jerk."

BOOM! We were hanging from a string. It was kind of weird and hurt a little bit.

The guy started again, "Now don't unlock arms until you fly over this box one time! Every one understand?" we all shook our heads yes, "Now who is going to pull the rip cord?"

"I am", said my dad.

"Okay, when I give you thumbs up you pull it", said the guy, "Everything understood?"

We all agreed yes.

The guy checked us out one last time, just to be sure and said, "All right here you go! Watch for my thumbs up."

I heard a noise, I guess it was the machine starting the raising. I was right, up we began. At first it wasn't sooo... bad, but the higher we got the faster my heart beat rose and my fear along with it.

My dad looked at me and my sister and asked, "Why are we doing something this crazy?"

I couldn't talk, my heart was so far up my throat.

My dad asked if we wanted him to tell us before he pulled the rip cord or just do it. We both replied immediately, "Just do it."

Every foot higher we got the ground seemed to be sooo... far away and people looked like tiny ants wondering around. I could see the whole park. The scenery was pretty. Then I remembered it wouldn't be that pretty when it comes rushing towards me quickly.

Then with no other thought we stopped. I promise my heart started beating about a 1,000 times a minute. I could taste my bitter fear.

I looked at my dad hoping I wouldn't see what he was about to do, but that wasn't going to happen. I watched in fear as his hand slowly made it's way to the rip cord inch by inch. He placed his hand on the rip cord and he slowly pulled it.

Silence. My heart stopped. I heard nothing. All I can remember feeling is an unexplainable SWOOSH as we rushed quickly 150 feet towards the green ground. I felt as if I was going to die. And right when I thought my life was going end... we swung up over everybody and back over the box. Without even knowing my screaming turned to laughter. I was having fun. We swung back and forth. " I'm flying", I thought. My sister and dad were laughing too.

I unlocked my arms with my dad and sister and stretched them out. The wind was blowing in my face and I was having a great time.

We swung several more times back and forth, then we had to grab a loop with a string on it to stop us. We grabbed the string and stopped directly over the box. They got us to stand up again. Then the instructors unhooked us and let us go. We were helped out of our suits and released. We ran to tell my mom how much fun we had.

As my sister and dad were telling my mom how fun the ride was, I was thinking, " That was the most awesome, fun, greatest thing I have ever

done. Why was I so afraid?" I cleared my thoughts and started talking to my mom.

" Was it fun? ", my mom asked.

" Yes!!!" , I said literally screaming, " it was the best."

My sister looked at me and said, " Aren't you glad you experienced the ' Extreme Sky Flier' ?"

" Yes ", I screamed, " if I didn't ride that ride I would be miserable with regret for the rest of the week."

On our way to the next ride I thought , " Fear doesn't accomplish anything."

LIFE'S LESSONS

It was a summer of love. It was a summer of heartache. It was a summer in which I learned one of life's most important lessons.

I was around nine years old, as well as he. We lived two houses apart and had known each other all our lives. But that summer we became much closer than either one of us could have imagined.

His name was Trenton. He had blond hair that was always brushing the tops of his eyes, sometimes I wondered why he didn't complain about it getting in the way. Nonetheless, it was nothing short of beautiful to me. But, by far, his best feature was his eyes. He had the most stunning blue eyes I'd ever seen. I can still see them staring back at me.

I think it was sometime in June, because it had just began to get smouldering hot out, when I heard a knock at the door. "Danielle you have a friend here!" My mom yelled from the living room.

"Who is it, Mom?"

"I believe it's that little Trenton from bdown the road."

I knew the name but, like I said, I hadn't known him very well before that summer. "Coming," I replied.

I approached the door. "Hey," I said. "Whats up?"

"My friend Matt was supposed to come up today and we were going to go the pond, but he couldn't. Sick or something. Anyway, I was wondering if you wanted to come."

He was so cute! I really hadn't realized till now, but he was just adorable. "Uh-huh," I said stupidly. Like that was any kind of answer.

"So, you do?" He said as if he wasn't sure if that was an answer or not.

"Yeah. Just let me ask my mom."

She agreed and I couldn't help but think as I laced up my shoes how incredibly happy I was that he had asked me. Of all the friends he must have, he asked me. I was convinced that that had to have meant someting.

After lacing my shoes I ran out the front door and stood on the porch to find him waiting in the driveway. I remember distinctly standing on that porch for a moment and soaking the picture of him in my driveway in. Then I ran to him.

"So, where is this pond?" I asked as we exited my driveway and began walking down the road.

"Well, you cross the creek right up here and there's a path," he said as he pointed towards the creek. He looked away from the path to me. Our eyes really locked for the first time. "Takes you right up to the pond."

"OK," I said somewhat dreading the walk but still grinning inside at us having made eye contact.

We walked about two minutes down the road until we ran upon the well beaten path. It lead very far into the hills.

"OK, now we have to cross the creek," he said reluctantly. "Come on, I'll help you."

He jumped from rock to rock all the way across the creek. He made it look so easy. I could Tell he'd done it mant times before.

"Now jump on that rock," he ^{said as} ~~said~~ he pointed to a big rock about one foot into the water.

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"Now jump on that rock," he ^{said as} ~~said~~ he pointed to a big rock about one foot into the water.

I did, and almost fell, too. Then he grabbed my hand and said "One big jump and you're over the creek."

I did as he had directed once again and he held my hand the whole time.

"That was fairly easy," I said out of breath.

"See, it's not that hard."

The path was long. We walked for about fifteen minutes non-stop. But I soon found out it was well worth it.

We approached a huge clearing. There was a big ring of land with trees all around it. In the middle there was a beautiful pond. The water was not blue, as could be expected, but rather a real pretty nature-like green. And the scenery was just breath-taking. Some of the largest and most beautiful trees I've ever seen.

"Pretty, huh?" Trenton said as he looked around with a smile on his face. It was almost as if he thought of it as being his.

"Yes. Very pretty. How long have you known about this?" I asked.

"I found it last year and Matt and me have been coming up here ever since. Much better than a clubhouse, wouldn't you say?"

"Definitely," I said agreeingly.

He showed me around. Gave me a tour of the place you might say. Then he showed me what he called "our seats". They were two big rocks close enough to the pond to stick your feet in it while you were sitting on them. Which actually became one of our favorite things to do up there.

"Sometimes," he said quietly, "I like to lay on my rock and watch the clouds go by. You never really realize how fast they're going till you stare at them for a while."

By the time he had finished saying this he was down to a whisper and had begun to lay on his rock and stare into the sky. It was truly a Kodak moment. I couldn't help stare for a while before joining him.

As the days went by Trenton and I became much closer. We were now making regular trips up to the pond, which we soon came to refer to as "our own little world".

Even though we never really did much up there besides skipping rocks and watching the clouds, I feel like I did a lot of growing up up there. Simply because we did so much talking. I mean it was really the first time I'd had a serious discussion with one of my peers. He listened to everything I had to say. And I did the same for him. And we both had a mutual respect for one another because of that.

I remember the day as if it were yesterday. I hadn't seen Trenton in three days, which was very odd. So I decided to take myself a little walk down to his house to make sure he wasn't sick or anything. I walked up the long, narrow driveway, practically had to climb up the steps (they were so huge), and rang the doorbell. A woman who I supposed was his mom answered quite quickly.

"Hello. Can I help you?"

"Yes, I'm Danielle. I'm here to see Trenton," I said in my most polite tone.

"Oh! You must be the girl he's been visiting so much lately.

You are such a cutie, you know that," she said with a remarkable grin.

"Thank you," I said quickly, obviously trying to get the chit-chat over with. "May I see him now?"

"Honey he's packing at the moment. Has been for two days now, don't know what's taking the boy so long. Perhaps you could come see him early tomorrow before we leave."

"Leave?" I said nervously. "Where are you going?"

"He didn't tell you?" she said with a concerned look.

I shook my head.

"Honey we're moving tomorrow," her voice was so low it was near a whisper. "To Owensboro. He's known for months now I can't imagine why he wouldn't have told you."

"That's okay," I said trying my best to hold back the tears.

"Just tell him I stopped by."

And with that, I sprinted off the porch, jumped over those big steps, and ran as fast as I could back home with tears rolling down my cheeks.

I stopped at my front door remembering that I couldn't show my face at the moment. So I took a seat on the porch and finished my crying. Then I went in the house, took a shower, and went to bed that night without dinner.

The next morning I was awakened by my mother yelling "Get up, Danielle! That little boy's here."

I jumped from my bed and unraveled myself from my pony decorated sheets. I knew instantly who the "little boy" was. It was Trenton. He had come to say that he was going to stay. That he couldn't possibly leave the pond...or me.

I slipped on some clothes, sleepy-eyed I might add, and ran through the house. I opened my front door and stepped out onto my front porch to find him standing in my driveway with his hands in his pockets, staring at the creek, waiting for me.

I walked slowly up to him, not really wanting him to pick up on my eagerness, and said "What's up?" in a cracky morning voice.

He looked at me with those beautiful blue eyes. "Nothing much. Just wanted to say goodbye."

Goodbye? I thought. Oh please no, Not goodbye.

"We're leaving in a few minutes I'm really not looking forward to the drive."

"Is this for good?" I asked softly.

"As far as I know."

"Why didn't you tell me? Why didn't you tell me sooner? Your mother said you knew." I said accusingly.

"Danielle, I was having fun. And I hope you were too. I didn't want to ruin that. If I had told you, we probably wouldn't have the memories we have now."

Hearing that made me feel terrible for having been mad at him for not telling me.

"Will I ever see you again?" I said fighting the tears with everything in me.

"Yeah. I'll visit all the time."

"Promise?" I said almost doubting his words.

"Promise."

And with that, he was gone. And despite his promise I never saw him again. I got a letter from him about two years ago thanking me for all the great times I'd given him. He didn't

send me a picture and asked that I not send him one. He said that he wanted to remember me just the way I was in his mind. And he asked that I do the same for him. That request made me cry.

That summer taught me a lot. I learned how to do such things as skip rocks and catch minnows in a pond. But most importantly I learned how ~~important it is to~~ cherish the relationships you have with people. Because you never know when they'll no longer be there to watch the clouds roll by with you.

The Leader

I got out of the van and gazed into the endless gray sky. The rain came down as a light mist in front of a majestic scene of natural wonder. This was an arid region of the Texas panhandle. Yet it was raining. Off in the distance there was a dark, looming silhouette of a giant dome was barely visible in the foggy air. It was Enchanted Rock, the largest solid piece of granite in the world. It was so named because after being exposed to the hot, prairie sun all day at night it moaned as it cooled. This was Enchanted Rock National Park. We wouldn't reach the rock for another two days.

However, it was doubtful we would hear the sleeping giant moan on this trip. It was unseasonably cold and the sun had hidden itself behind rain clouds. I was on my first real hiking trip. Wide-eyed in awe of the natural beauty that surrounded me. I stood next to my scoutmaster. I remember him being a giant bear of a man. He stood a towering two feet taller than me as he oversaw the action of the boys getting their gear together from under his cowboy hat. "We're finally here," he said to me after finally noticing my presence. He was a man of few words.

"Yep, and what nice weather we're having," I said looking back up at him with a smile. He smiled back and laughed a little.

"I've been thinking," he said as he looked down to me after a short pause. The rain dripped off the brim of his cowboy hat as he spoke. "I'm going to take all the older guys with me on a more extensive hike. The younger guys won't be able to handle it and their going to need an acting senior patrol leader to keep them in line. You no how those guys don't listen to adults. Maybe they'll respond better to you."

I looked back at him with a look of immediate surprise. I was honored that he chose me for such a position of responsibility. He put his large hand on my shoulder. "You have what it takes to be their leader. I know you'll do an excellent job. I wouldn't expect anything less from you."

"Thank you, sir," I said with great pride in my voice.

Fueled with my newfound self-confidence, I rounded up the junior scouts who had already gathered their gear and led them out of the parking lot and onto the trail. With a map in my hand provided by the National Park Service, the rain on my back, and some spring in my step I led the reluctant boys on the two-mile hike to the campsite. The older scouts under the leadership of our scoutmaster headed off towards the rock.

We arrived at our destination soaked to the bone and tired from our travel. Soon the reality of my responsibility began to sink in. A certain group of boys, who were notorious troublemakers, would not follow

directions. The four of them did everything together. They always huddle together whispering and plotting their next scheme. These boys were consistently unprepared and over zealous, rushing into every situation and going off half cocked. They never took the time to prepare properly at camp and they would rather wonder around in the woods by themselves. When you are camping in bad weather, there are certain procedures to be followed. I directed them to set up their tent on high ground because I feared the rain wouldn't let up. Being rebellious by nature and having no respect for authority, they refused to listen.

I found myself posed with a decision. Do I order them to set up their tent on high ground? Or do I allow them the opportunity to learn for themselves? I knew that experience is the best teacher and I let them proceed in their ignorance. I sat back and smiled because all I had to do now was wait.

As the gloomy afternoon faded into the black of night the rain increased in intensity and the wind blew hard. The sky would light up with a flash of lighting followed by a crack of thunder. I ordered everyone into their tents for the night to get out of the rain. Before I turned in for the night I saw four images walking away from the campsite and disappear into a thicket.

Knowing these boys didn't lack the common sense to eventually get out of the rain I retired to my tent. The night slowly marched on and the weather grew worse. I heard the defiant boys talking and laughing as they made their way back to the tent around two in the morning. I smiled to myself, rolled over, and went back to sleep. "Just wait," I thought, "Just you wait."

I woke up at 5:30 in the morning. The sun was just making its way over Enchanted Rock and illuminating the puddles of standing water on the ground. Mocking birds were chirping in greeting the sun as it rose. As senior patrol leader was my job to wake up the boys and get breakfast going. I pulled on my boots and walked towards the tent that housed the insubordinate youths. My leather boots stomped through the mud as I walked past a shimmering patch of grass to the tent.

When I reached the tent I unzipped it and peered in. There sat the four lads in a giant puddle. They looked like drowned rats. All of their gear from their sleeping bags to their packs was soaked. They squinted at the light that poured through the open flap of the tent and they shielded their eyes as they looked at me.

I chose not to rub the incident in their face because I assumed I had made my point.

"You have ten minutes to get up and dressed," I said calmly into the tent. "You four have to cook breakfast this morning. Oh yeah, don't ever sneak out after curfew again."

Of Marching and Life

Beads of perspiration wet my forehead as I snapped the white plume on top of my blue and green hat and slid them both high above my matted black hair. I could smell the material of the uniform pants and jacket as I pulled them over on top of my clothes. The stench wrinkled my nose; it didn't smell bad, but it was both new and peculiar to me. As I laced up my white Dinkle marching shoes, I quickly glanced at the mirror before me. This is not right, I thought, now stopping what I was doing. I stood up to my full height, for all my four foot eight inches was worth. My thin frame did not come close to filling up my suit, and the hat was big, allowing me to barely see the reflection of my almond brown eyes peering from beneath. Everything fit me, and yet it looked so stupid before my eyes. I looked at the mirror for what seemed as ages, until I found myself being watched. I looked up to see Megan and Kelly, two of my closest friends, come into the room.

"I don't think I can march with these big baggy pants," I complained, hearing my voice rise as I talked. "They're only about half an inch from the ground!"

"You need to adjust your suspenders," Megan reminded me, already at my side in assistance.

"Don't worry," Kelly said, "We all look stupid." Her dark eyes searched her own uniform, and we followed in unison. "I bet we'll get used to it soon. It doesn't seem the seniors have a problem with them!"

"I hope so," said Megan flatly.

"Yeah," I argued, "but they're all tall. They look halfway decent. Do we? No!!" I cut myself short, suddenly feeling that I was acting like a baby.

Megan stood back at arms' length, looking pleased at my pants. I had to admit that they did look much better now that she had tightened the suspenders, but that still didn't make up for the broad shoulders.

"They don't look bad at all. We'll have to stand straight for the marching, and they won't look as bad as you think," Kelly said. She must have seen my expression as I looked myself over. I stood straight before the mirror and saw the shoulder pads go back into a normal position. I looked much better.

"There you are, guys! We've gotta go!" Ronny said as she burst through the door into the room. I had known Ronny for three years, and she had become one of my closest friends. Honest and caring, we still knew that even she was not perfect.

"Why?" I asked, skeptical. We all knew our friend had a slight tendency to overreact.

"Because it's time to go outside. We've gotta march, if you didn't forget," she said, a knot forming above her eyebrow. "Mr. Reese is talking."

With that, we grabbed out clarinets nearby and ran out the door in complete dishevel.

As we ran out onto the front lawn of the school to meet the band, we realized we were late. The band, fully dressed and in uniform, were standing straight in silence, with their instruments ready in their hands. By the time my friends and I had found our positions, Mr. Reese was almost done with his speech.

"You have all worked hard," he was saying, "each and every one of you. Tonight is a beginning for some, and an ending for others. Tonight determines how we do the rest of the season." He held up a white cue ball. "I have always had a cue ball, one that determines your wins, your losses. Tonight, I come here with a blank one. You write your perfection...you write

your losses. I can't do that for you, and obviously, neither can the ball. I can only encourage you to make this night a success. I only ask one thing....Let's do this North Style!"

With that we all started whooping and yelling, until ReAnne, the drum major, put her hands up for silence. Then the drum cadences began and we all marched in unison, forming a tidy, single file line behind the saxophones. As we marched up the rounding path to the football field, I watched in wonderment as the line curved with the road before me. All of our feet were rising and falling at the same time, a blue and green caterpillar crawling slowly up the black pavement. We stopped marching only to get in our pre-set positions before we marched on the field. Then we marched on in small and tidy lines, and before we knew it we were in our places playing The Star Spangled Banner. I listened to the whole band while playing my clarinet, my air filling the instrument and mixing in harmony with them.

It was half time and my stomach had butterflies. I was scared, and looking around to my friends, I saw they were, too. I knew this time we had to march. It was the first time I had marched in a performance in my life. As we bumped down the bleachers, my stomach got tighter and I descended to the ground to go to the football field.

I was surprised when we marched on that my feet kept the steady rhythm of the drums. I was also aware of the movement my hat was making as my plume swayed high above me with every step. I felt the crowd could see me perfectly because, looking ahead, I saw no one else bobbing as I was.

I silently prayed that we would not make it to the sideline, but we arrived there anyway, and all soon enough. The cadences again began, and we marched onto the field. I looked nervously over at Kelly and managed a smile. She looked as if she were going to throw up. I was afraid I would lose my step when a senior, Mark, started the rhythmic "left...left..." behind me. He had no idea how much of a lifesaver he was, as I just knew I would mess up from the start. I was grateful he never stopped until we stood in our arches, ready to start the James Bond piece. All at once I forgot when to turn around, and ReAnne started at once, yelling "Hup, hup, ready, go," to the band. I felt my scalp tingling as I sweated, trying to remember when to turn around.

"Now!" someone whispered. It was Mark. I could have kissed him then and there, as I started turning with the rest of the group at the right moment. I whispered a "thank you" to him before I started playing my instrument, licking my reed as I prepared to play.

The rest of the song went excellent. From getting the beginning right, I somehow found myself able to make it through the whole song. My marked time, pops, back marching, and jazz runs were done on the dot and in unison with the whole band. As the last note sounded, I found myself smiling.

Our next piece started. It was fast, and I found myself exhilarated by the lively music and marching my feet to the beat. I caught myself remembering moves I normally forgot. As I ran to the backside of the field, I heard the crowd screaming and clapping at us. I mustered the courage to look up and I saw smiling faces; happy cheerful, and supportive. I loved it. As I marched back up to the front of the field and aimed my clarinet like a weapon, I felt confident that I could do anything.

The last of our songs went well. I was certain no one noticed that I almost tripped in the third song, but I blushed with embarrassment anyway. I managed to keep on going, though, and I made it to the end.

As we played the last note of our presentation, I was disappointed and almost sad that it

was over. As we took our ending poses, I formed a gun with my hands, dropped to my knee, and looked up to the crowd. They were standing and cheering, each one yelling supportively. As I stood up, I began to yell and whoop, as did the band. I knew then that I would remember that moment for the rest of my life. That afternoon I had learned many important things: self-respect, courage, and the wisdom to try new things. I would never forget that game, the way I felt, nor the lessons it taught me about marching...as well as life.

My Pal, Robert

Have you ever heard the saying, "hindsight is 20/20"? Well, I don't think that there is a week that goes by that that saying isn't proved to me over again. One night this past spring I learned a little "look before you leap" lesson that taught me to more carefully evaluate the circumstances of a situation before I actually put myself in it.

I think it's safe to say that I am a "weirdo magnet". I firmly believe that when I am at my most vulnerable, a flashing sign appears on my head that only strange people can see that says, "TALK TO ME! TALK TO ME!" You may think I'm exaggerating, but trust me, I'm not.

Beginning in the month of April through the month of September I work for a wonderful and efficient organization called the Cincinnati Reds. When I first started the job, I wasn't quite comfortable driving myself over to the stadium so I had to rely on my mom to drop me off and pick me up. Since there is never a set time that I get off work I would have to call my mom and then go wait for her outside at the service entrance. The approximate time was usually about 11:00 p.m. Usually there is a trusty security guard named Arnie, who works at the service entrance. You know the type, about sixty-five years old and couldn't protect you from anything even if he wasn't sleeping or missing in action.

So picture this: It's 11:00 at night, I'm standing outside the service entrance alone, all dressed up and looking like the perfect target for any psychopath that happens to be in the area. I guess this might be a good time to describe what it's like at the service entrance. The tunnel itself is dark, cold, smelly, and there is always some unidentified substance dripping from the ceiling. At the head of the tunnel there is a little security guard shack where the smell of a burning illegal substance is often present. There is also an entrance to the field, a room for the night (clean-up) crew, and a metal folding chair where Arnie usually sits when he is around. Around this entrance is reserved parking for important people and it is generally the place where the night crew hangs out. Now I don't want to be mean, but a night crew member who is not on probation of some sort is the exception to the rule.

Anyway, as you can imagine I was feeling kind of nervous; and of course, Arnie was nowhere to be found. Normally someone would wait with me for my parents, but the circumstances were out of the ordinary. As I was standing there outside the service entrance, that horrible feeling came over me that you get when you feel someone's eyes on you, and I could see someone coming towards me out of the corner of my eye. Rather than just stand there awkwardly, I turned to face the person hoping and praying that he wasn't going to touch me, talk to me, or maybe ABDUCT me.

When he got about two inches from my face he said hoarsely, "Hi, I'm Robert." His breath reeked of alcohol and a mixture of some other things like, oh, I don't know garbage? I was inwardly freaking out. His appearance was even more unsettling. He was

garbage? I was inwardly freaking out. His appearance was even more unsettling. He was a guy about my height, was wearing a dirty bandana around his head that I think was white at one time, and he had one tooth in the front of his mouth that had a sign on it that said, "Next tooth- 1 mile"

"Hi." I responded, trying to keep my cool. "Where are you, Arnie?" I thought to myself.

"What's your name?" he asked.

"Oh no, he's trying to pick up on me!" I thought. I contemplated making up a fake name, but my mind went blank. "Erin." I responded while shaking like a leaf.

"That's a pretty name." He said. Of course, I could have said my name was Bertha Sue and he probably still would have said it was pretty. Every minute seemed like an eternity as I struggled to be polite and make small talk with my new pal. I kept inching away from him but he kept moving forward to make up for it. Every time he attempted to make conversation, I cordially gave one-word answers with a forced smile. I couldn't help but feel a little guilty for the way I was acting, even though I was scared to death.

"You shouldn't be standing out here by yourself. Somebody could do something to you, you know? That wouldn't be right." He said, looking me up and down and making me want to crawl out of my skin. "Yeah, people like you!" I wanted to scream. Finally, after what seemed like years, but was probably only about five minutes, my mom and step-dad pulled up. By that time Arnie (the trusty security guard) had materialized, but had taken no notice of my predicament. I grabbed my bag, took off at world record speed towards the car, and yelled over my shoulder, "There's my mom, bye!" Oh, but it wasn't over yet. My source of torture couldn't let me get away that easily. He followed me over to the car. No, I am not joking. As I opened the door, Robert stepped up to the car.

"Hi, I'm Robert." He said, extending his hand. My mom shook it to be polite. "I've been watching your daughter for ya." My mom was at a loss for words.

"Uh.....thanks." she said. "See ya later." She slammed the car door and as we drove away, I began to think about what had happened. I don't know what Robert wanted. Maybe his intentions were good, and maybe they weren't. Either way, I was never in any real danger. Even though I was scared, I could have been more polite. People are people, no matter what. However, I don't think I'll ever wait for my ride alone again.